Tape #4 : Side A

Dr. Michael E. DeBakey with Don Schanche

Pierre Hotel, N. Y.

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DR. DeBAKEY: You know, the French are very distant, for a long time for the exception, you know. And... But he treated me so kindly. Then he liked for me to assist him. This put me in kind of a bad spot with some of the others there. Of course, everybody wanted to be his first assistant. And he would occasionally go to another private hospital to operate. And he'd call me and ask me if I'd like to go and help him. And I'd go with him and help him. And I remember one time he had an emergency--somebody was bleeding and he wanted to know if I'd bring my blood transfusion apparatus with me that I had brought.

SCHANCHE: Was this your slave pump?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, that's right. Yeah.

So I went with him and gave the transfusion and it was quite successful and he was very impressed. Then later they had

DR. DeBAKEY: to do it at the clinic and I had quite an experience with it and finally wrote a whole article about it. You know, in French.

SCHANCHE: Wasn't it kind of a feather in your cap to even be accepted on Leriche's service at that time?

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, yes. Very much so.

SCHANCHE: Did you have trepidations about whether you'd be accepted or not?

DR. DeBAKEY: Well, when I first arrived I didn't expect anything like that, you know. I expected to be treated like a stranger really and I was going to try to get as much as I could out of it. And I was trying to find my way and they were courteous, but they weren't very warm. You know. Who was DeBakey? They didn't think too much of the Americans anyway. Oh, there was not any anti-American feeling; it was just that there wasn't any great admiration for us. I mean in medicine. But I found them to be rather provencial to be perfectly honest with you. I was amazed for example they were still operating with gloves that we thought belonged in the autopsy room. But this was an economic thing with them.

DR. DeBAKEY: They had to wear these heavy rubber gloves because it was more economical and they wore longer. And I thought their research laboratory was very poorly equipped compared to ours. I worked in their research laboratory and it was kind of in an out house where they kept some of the animals in the basement. It wasn't too clean. And I found them to be relatively unclean and relatively lacking in a true sense of asepsis. You know, they just partially adhered to that concept.

Leriche himself was a neat operator and a good operator on the things he liked to do. But in other areas of general surgery he was not a very good operator.

SCHANCHE: What were his specialties? There was the Leriche..what they call the Leriche....

DR. DeBAKEY: Sympathectomy was his specialty. Sympathectomy. He did it beautifully. He liked to do that. He did it beautifully. The other things that he did weren't particularly good. I mean to say they were good, but any one in particular wasn't superior.

Oh, I had a good time when I was there too. After a while

DR. DeBAKEY: I got to know everybody very well and I enjoyed the people. And I enjoyed Strasbourg and I got to be good friends with many of the people there. There were two fellows who later made names for themselves developing innovative procedures. A man by the name of Kunlin who really started the whole by-pass concept.

SCHANCHE: How do you spell that?

DR. DeBAKEY: K-U-N-L-I-N. Kunlin. Jean Kunlin. And he was a wonderful person--very fine character, very kindly. He was the chef de clinique. And really, it was because of him that the rest of the group sort of became finally--accepted me because he had the substance to say. He was the chief, you see, of the service under Dr. Leriche. He was like the chief resident. And he was very kindly to me. He was a kindly man to begin with and we..

SCHANCHE: Was he French?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, he's French. Actually, originally Swiss. From a Swiss family, but he lived in Strasbourg. And we became very good friends--very close friends. He was married

DR. DeBAKEY: and I got to know his wife well. And later, much later of course, why he got to know my wife and they became good friends and we got.. We remained good friends through the years still.

SCHANCHE: Who was the other gentleman?

DR. DeBAKEY: The other one was a man by the name of Dos Santos, who was the son of the professor Dos Santos from Lisbon, Portugal who developed aortography. He did the first one. And his son, this boy, Dos Santos, who was there when I was there as the same way I was. What they call an assistant étranger . Developed the whole procedure--concept of endarterectomy. And...

SCHANCHE: Did he do that in Portugal?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, later. But he got his training with us.

SCHANCHE: How many of you were there at one time on Leriche's service?

DR. DeBAKEY: There were about I would say about ten of us who were there during the time I was there. And about six of us who had the appointment for a year. There was a Rumanian boy. There was.. I've got a picture of them which shows all of us. Yeah. A group.

SCHANCHE: How did you live in Strasbourg? Did you have an apartment?

DR. DeBAKEY: Lived in a pension. (note: pronounced "pen . si . on"). I lived with a woman, very interesting woman who had lost her husband during the war and she ran this pension. She owned the house and so had... she put it out for rent. She had a three story.. She had a daughter who worked some.. oh, it was in Paris or some other town. She used to come in periodically. And she was engaged to a boy in Strasbourg and they finally got married. So she was kind of alone. She was a rather motherly woman and she sort of took over for me. You know, she treated me almost like a mother did. And she was very kind to me. And sometimes on Sunday she'd ask me if I didn't have anything to do would I like to go to the show with her or go to something with her--have dinner or something like that, you know. Or she'd fix me something and we'd eat together. Very, very sweet lady. I was very fond of her. And I remember when I left she gave me an old book that was on medicine. A book that was two or three hundred years old. She said, "I don't know

DR. DeBAKEY: what this book's about. It's in our family library. Never did know what it's about." Beautifully bound and had been kept well and she wanted me to have it. Very sweet.

SCHANCHE: What was it?

DR. DeBAKEY: And...

SCHANCHE: Galen's original recipes?

DR. DeBAKEY: I have it but I've forgotten now. It was some old French book of medicine.

SCHANCHE: Did you have trouble, incidentally, with your French when you came into that medical setting? I mean you spoke French as a youngster but did...

DR. DeBAKEY: No, no. I did have some trouble with it. Yeah. Because of different accent and different expressions and so on.

SCHANCHE: More sophisticated French?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, much more. And I had to catch on, but it was...I.. in two or three months I was quite fluent. I gave a paper. I used to discuss it--it would be in French. And I gave a paper in French. I thought, you know, there was the boys, there were several boys--foreign boys--that I got to know well. Once, I remember one of the boys from Greece,

DR. DeBAKEY: a man who came in the same time I did, had just gotten married and was on his honeymoon. And he got.. He hadn't been there more than two or three months and he said to me, he said, "How did you learn French so well? You speak it so well." I said, "Well, of course, I could speak a little before I came here." And he said, "Well, you know, I..the only thing I can do is speak it...learned a little bit in school." And he said, "I'm having a great deal of trouble." And he said, "They tell me that the best way to learn is to get you a girl." And I said, "Well, I don't know about that. Maybe it is," but I said, " You really need to study some too." So, oh about two or three weeks later, I guess, a month later, we were talking again. We used to walk together. He lived on the way to where I lived. And, you see, the program in France was that you got there by about nine, eight-thirty or nine o'clock in the morning. We worked until about two o'clock --two-thirty and then you had lunch. You came back at six and then worked until eight or nine. So I had him..sometime later than that, I forgotten maybe a month or so later , we were walking again together

DR. DeBAKEY: and he said, "You know, I think I'm making some progress with French, don't you." I said, "Yes, I think you are." He said, "Well, I've got me a girl." And I said, "Is she helping you?" "Oh," he said, "yes. She helps me a lot." And I couldn't help...I was amused by this because here this had all come..on..on. You know, explain to your wife on a honeymoon that he had already..

SCHANCHE: Already had a mistress.

DR. DeBAKEY: He'd already had a mistress. I thought to myself, "My goodness." You know, I just had been brought up differently, I guess. But.. Of course, the interesting thing is that I found out later, much later, it was before I left--I learned a lot about the way of life of these people. There was hardly anybody that didn't have a mistress. It was funny. I really was the only one, I think.

SCHANCHE: Now you'd gotten to....

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah. And I... It was funny how I found out about this because they'd take me out after a while. You know, after I'd been there about six months why I became part of it. And we became very close and friendly and they would take

DR. DeBAKEY: me out. And it didn't bother them at all, you know, for them to take me out with their mistress. It was a funny way of life for me. I didn't understand it at first.

SCHANCHE: How did you originally get on Leriche's service? Did you write to Leriche? Or did Dr. Ochsner write...?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah. Well, actually it was initiated by Professor Matas. And then I always talked with Dr. Ochsner. They were good friends of course. And Dr. Ochsner and Matas both arranged it by letter and when I arrived, of course, they were waiting for me. They expected--because Leriche had already given me an appointment.

SCHANCHE: You went on from there to where? To a..

DR. DeBAKEY: Well, then I went to Germany, you see. I went to Heidelberg. And it was quite a contrast. Because, Kirschner was a typical Prussian--very aloof, very dignified, very proper. And..

SCHANCHE: That's K-I-R-S-C-H-N-E-R. Kirschner.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah. Martin Kirschner. He was one of the German surgeons at the time. And there are many things known as... He was very innovative. We still have some procedures that are

DR. DeBAKEY: named after him and things like what's called the Kirschner wire that he had devised. And there was a very striking contrast between the way his service was run and the way Leriche's service was run. Leriche was a very paternalistic person in terms of his service. And very flexible, very liberal. His attitude towards the service

SCHANCHE: A man of many parts (?).

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, that's right. And he didn't pay--He didn't pay too much attention to things like promptness and you know if the operation started at nine-thirty instead of nine, it didn't matter to him. His lectures were often delayed too. And this set the whole tone.

SCHANCHE: It was more relaxed.

DR. DeBAKEY: Much more. Kirschner was a very strong disciplinarian. He started in the morning at seven o'clock sharp--right on the minute. And if anybody walked in after he started, because we always started with an X-ray conference and review the patients for the day. And this was promptly at seven. And if any men had walked in after he walked in there and started, he would yell at some way and no excuse was acceptable. You know, his father could have died. And

DR. DeBAKEY: your wife could have died. Or anything else. They had no excuse for being late. So everybody was scared to death of him. And they were often scared to speak about anything. But everything was very, very prompt and deliberate--done in the way he had said it had to be done. Well, I adjusted myself to all this as soon as I got there, of course. And..

SCHANCHE: Did you speak German?

DR. DeBAKEY: No, I couldn't speak a word of German. So, I had to learn German. But I took sort of a crash course to learn how to at least get along. And within about six weeks I was speaking enough to get along with everybody. And I had enough in the way of conversational words and knowledge to be able to get along on the street and in the pension that I lived in. It was a boarding house and we would eat together. And I'll never forget one time they had what they called "lung soup."

SCHANCHE: Lung soup?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah. I'd never seen lung soup before.

SCHANCHE: I don't know what that is?

DR. DeBAKEY: Well, it's made from lungs of animals. And I guess about the only thing you can do with a lung is make a soup out of it.

DR. DeBAKEY: I don't know. But it... I thought it was terrible. I couldn't eat it. Things... You know they were very poor. They were still scraping.

SCHANCHE: Did you ever become a subject of Kirschner's ire?

DR. DeBAKEY: No. That was very interesting. Yes. Well, there was no reason... I never had any real responsibility. I worked as an assistant to everybody else. But, the interesting thing is that it wasn't long before he took an interest in me and took kindly... When I first got there, he was sort of.. He ignored me. And I didn't pay a great deal of attention. I thought that was his way. So it didn't bother me very much. Besides I really was interested more in trying to get closer to the youngest there. You know, I could get more from them than I could from him. And I was curious and asked a lot of questions. There was one fellow by the name of Ernst who had a car. He was a cut above most of them obviously financially--obviously a well-to-do family. He was the only one that had an automobile. And he and I became very good friends and he took a liking to me. And I took a liking to him and we got along beautifully. And every

DR. DeBAKEY: Friday night, we'd go off together. He'd invite me to go with him to Mamheim to a meeting of the Nazi group that he belonged to. I don't know whether it was an S.S. group, now, or what it was. But I've got pictures of myself with this group sitting around .. in a beer stuhale... around a big round table drinking beer together. Well, the meetings occurred every Friday night. So he invited me to join him in driving over to Mamheim, which is not far, but a much bigger city than, of course, Heidelberg, and I guess the headquarters for this Nazi group, I don't know. He was an officer of this group. And he'd go to the meeting, you see, and I'd sit in the beer stuhale waiting for them to come back. And then they'd come and we'd have beer and sausage and things like that, you see. And then drive back to..late at night..back to Heidelberg. And I don't know whether they were S.S. Nazi group that I was with or not at that time. It might have..

SCHANCHE: This was the hayday of the...

DR. DeBAKEY: Of the Nazi. Oh, yeah. Oh, I used to see them parading up and down the street with shovels instead of guns. Uniforms.

SCHANCHE: Didn't this have some affect on you? You were seeing what was going to happen in Europe at...

DR. DeBAKEY: No, I didn't. Because you see, I didn't... You know, I could sense something but I was not aware.

SCHANCHE: You were non-political then.

DR. DeBAKEY: I was non-political then. Completely. Completely. And it didn't have too much affect on me.

SCHANCHE: There was no personal intrusion into the medical world that you were in. Trying to get Jewish doctors out or anything?

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, yeah. There was some Jewish prejudice, but, you know, I didn't sense it as anything more than the kind of Jewish prejudice that I had seen in America. And I knew about that and I just accepted it as something that is inevitable. So, I wasn't aware of that, you know. And besides, you see, I was really thinking in terms of my relationship with this fellow, which was a good personal relationship and I enjoyed being with him. And he spoke a little English, so whenever I ...my German would get too involved and I couldn't say what I wanted to say, I'd ask him for the words in English. Sometimes he could help me. I remember one time we...he

DR. DeBAKEY: invited me to go with him when the wine festival takes place on the Rhine. That's when the new wine comes in.

SCHANCHE: The May Wine Festival.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, the May Wine Festival. Well, they have a big festival. And really...it's crazy really. It's like Mardi Gras and the people go nuts. You know you're... We drove down the Rhine from one city to the other and he knew a lot of the people, apparently, because when we'd get to a certain place--a certain restaurant or a certain beer stuhale--many of the people knew him. And he'd introduce me and we started drinking the new wine. They obv... They'd get a little tipsy too and everybody was very friendly and girls were friendly, you know. We had a wonderful time. And I just enjoyed it tremendously and he was very educational as well. I saw a lot of the country that way. So I had, in that respect, a more enjoyable kind of relationship there than I had in France, because I worked in France. They kept me busy. Although I had also some social relationships that were very enjoyable and educational too. But I enjoyed my experiences in Germany very much

DR. DeBAKEY: and I learned a great deal, particularly as far as discipline. For example, I saw for the first time the use of music in the operating room and in the wards. And I saw for the first time the use of exercise in a formal manner. There was a gymnast. He used to go from one ward to the next exercising patients on a regular scheduled basis. You see?

SCHANCHE: A therapist.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah. I hadn't seen that before.

SCHANCHE: Was that being practiced any place but...

DR. DeBAKEY: No, well, it may have been, but very, very few places that were generally known. And I adopted those ideas when I came back. I put them into practice. That's how I put music in our operating room and so on. And...

SCHANCHE: What kind of music did they play? Mostly Wagner? And...

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, they played march music and marching music for the exercise, especially. And in the operating room, they played all kinds of music, but mostly classical music.

SCHANCHE: Well, did Kirschner have an explanation for this?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, his idea was, you see, they used local anesthesia a great deal. And they also used spinal anesthesia. In fact, he had quite an apparatus for local anesthesia--hung up on the ceiling, pulled it down this way. And his idea was that it soothed the patients and took their mind off what was going on and so on. Listen to good music. So he had the earphones on them. He later became very warm to me and he used to have me at his home pretty regularly for dinner.

SCHANCHE: Because he was relaxed then and this hospital pressure.

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, yeah. Very relaxed. And he had a very good-looking daughter. Very good-looking girl. She was a little bit wild too.

SCHANCHE: Did you discover that from personal experience?

DR. DeBAKEY: No, I never went out with her. She went out with some other people. And I didn't want to get too involved with that. I was a little cautious about that. I'd rather find my own social...

SCHANCHE: How long were you there in Heidelberg?

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, I guess altogether about eight months. Then, I wanted to travel about Germany and I went... From there I went to Munich and then I went to Berlin to see Sauerburch. Had a wonderful visit with Sauerburch. You know, he was kind of a ... He was one of the bears. And he was... People.. He had a reputation of throwing them out. And there were many Americans that.. I remember one American who is now a professor of surgery and I assisted and operated on him and lost him--who came through when I was at Leriche's clinic. He came to me and told me of the experience he had in Berlin with Sauerburch. And he said, "I'd advise you not to go there." He was a Jew, too. He said, "Don't go there. Your wasting your time." And he said, "He's...He's a.. As far as I'm concerned," he said, "he's pig." Something like that. And, oh he was really down on him. Well, I went there. When I got there, I had letters to him from professors: from Dr. Ochsner, Dr. Matas, and Leriche and also, Kirschner. And I had asked them to write him. You know, to introduce me. You know, he thought I was a very important person when I arrived. Because first

DR. DeBAKEY: I went to his secretary's office and presented myself. And she said, "Ah, yes Dr. Sauerburchis expecting you." And I said, "Well, I don't want to disturb him I just want him to know I'm here and I'd like to visit his operating room and see his surgery." She said, "Well, he's expecting you so you'd better wait here. Let me tell him you're here." So pretty soon he came in and he was very kind and said he expected me and planned to see me. He asked me how Kirschner was? How Dr. Matas was? How was Leriche? And he said, "Now I'm very sorry that I won't be able to have you for dinner with me tonight." But he said, "Unfortunately, I have an official that I must go to." But he said, "Will you have lunch with me?" And I said, "Of course." And he said, "Well, when are you going to leave? " And I said, "Well, unfortunately I'm going to have to leave tomorrow." Because I was already going to leave tomorrow afternoon. And he said , "Well, at least you can have lunch with me today." "And now," he said, "we'll go to the operating room." So he took me up to the operating room and I watched him operate. When he got through he called me , "Come to my office." And we had lunch in his office. And he was very

DR. DeBAKEY: kind to me. And I... I must say that ...

SCHANCHE: What was he noted for?

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, well, his thoracic... He was a great pioneer of thoracic surgery. He did the earliest one. I suspect.. In fact, he did.. He started doing thoracic surgery in a chamber, negative chamber. So as to make it possible for the lungs to be expanded when the chest was open. He devised the Sauerbruch chamber. But he was noted for many other things too. He was very innovative. And you know later after the war there was a book written about his late stages. Because he kind of went nuts. He continued to operate when he should not have been operating.

SCHANCHE: What happened to your friend, Ernst?

DR. DeBAKEY: I really don't know. You know, the last time I was in Germany I tried to find out what happened to him. And nobody seemed to know after the war what happened to him. Some think he was killed in the war. But I don't know. Never have been able to trace him again.

SCHANCHE: Maybe he's practicing in Buenos Aires.

DR. DeBAKEY: He might be. Yeah.

SCHANCHE: Bogota, or some place.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah.

SCHANCHE: Under an assumed name. So you had that.. You felt none of the political affect at all.

DR. DeBAKEY: No. No. I didn't..

SCHANCHE: Not as still a relaxed international visitor.

DR. DeBAKEY: The only thing... There was one experience that I had that kind of went against my grain and I didn't like. I noticed that we did a lot of sterilization operations. And one day I said to.. and I assisted in these.. you see, and worked, I did some of them. It was very then.. for the males it was a vasectomy. That's very simple. So I said something one day to, I think it was Ernst or one of the other men, I said, "You know, why are some of these people wanting to be sterilized." Ernst said, "Well, they don't necessarily want to. They're ordered." And I said, "What do you mean 'ordered'?" "Well, there's a tribunal of three judges that are appointed that decide whether or not they are to be sterilized." And I said, "On what basis?" He said, "Well there's various bases. " He said, "There's certain .. That there.. These three judges find that they

DR. DeBAKEY: fall into certain categories, they're sterilized. One is insanity. They're declared insane and after we put them in an insane asylum why there sterilized. Another is if there is some..something in their background to indicate genetically that they have a high chance of giving birth to some who are deformed, or have other, for example, abnormalities or insanity in the family and that sort of thing. They have to be sterilized." And one of them also was that if, I think, if they particularly of Jewish extraction having certain other things. I've forgotten now. But, I found this kind of repulsive. And I didn't get into it too far, but it seemed to me cruel to make this decision. Because I saw some of these people and they didn't look like they were insane to me. I could talk to them.

SCHANCHE: Was this the first kind of medical-political-ethical crisis you faced?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yes. The first one I had faced. And it shocked me. I hadn't ever seen anything like this before--disheartening.

SCHANCHE: Did you refuse to participate in these operations after that?

DR. DeBAKEY: Well, you see, I didn't ... I was not really a participant in a true sense of the word. I was participating in the technical

DR. DeBAKEY: aspect of it. Assisting and so on to learn something about it and that's the way we did it. But, I didn't have to participate and it wasn't assigned to me. I had more responsibility...

SCHANCHE: You were more of an observer than a..an active participant.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah. That's right. Yeah. And after that I was not very keen about even observing this anymore. I didn't like it. I put my time elsewhere. And I'd seen enough of it anyway, you know, from a technical stand-point..

But, that's about the only thing. Oh, I would go down into the..at night, for example,..to the Palace. And--the Castle--the famous Castle on the hill. And there were several sort of beer joints that the boys would gather around at the university. And then there were some Americans there who were studying at the university, not in the college of medicine, I got to know. There was one fellow there who I always suspected of being a spy. And he was.. he used to tell me that he had been a reserve officer but he.. So he wanted me to be confident not to let anybody know he was a reserve officer. He said he might be thrown out if they knew that.

DR. DeBAKEY: And then he used to use me.. Ask me if I.. If he could use my address to get some mail he wanted. And I co-operated with him . But I didn't know, you know, this was.. And I decided I'd better avoid getting too involved with him. But he used to tell me a lot of things about Nazi's --a few things. The way they were building up militarily. And he was fearful of it. He said to me he wasn't going to stay at this university more than another year. He thought he'd better get out of there.

SCHANCHE: Were you there on the..what was it they called it? The ... at any rate--the long night when there was the first wild open persecution of Jews . They broke all the store windows and dragged Jews down and lynched them for examples.

DR. DeBAKEY: No , this occurred later.

SCHANCHE: That was in 1939, I guess.

DR. DeBAKEY: That's right. Yeah. Yeah. No, I was gone by then.

SCHANCHE: Was this sort of the beginning of the opening of your eyes to the political realities of the world? Or were you still pretty much concentrated on medicine..

DR. DeBAKEY: No, I think I didn't.. I wasn't as open about it as I perhaps should have been, because I was concentrating too much on

DR. DeBAKEY: medicine and surgery. And you see, I didn't see enough of the bad things that the Nazis were doing. Everything that I saw was..were kind, were fissilated.. And I was isolated. And I was treated so well. And I..you know, I had a very enjoyable experience. The Germans were very good to me and they treated me nicely and I had a good experience and I liked them. I admired their cleanliness, the neatness, the organization, the efficiency . It was a very striking contrast to Leriche's clinic and the French school.

SCHANCHE: Did you take away some of the..some of Kirschner's discipline?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yes, oh yes. I thought this discipline was good. I didn't .. I never ..

SCHANCHE: I notice in your own teaching of your assistants you tend to be more Kirschner than Leriche. Perhaps, very similar.

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, yeah. Well, I don't think that's necessarily Kirschner. That's just my intolerance with mediocrity and carelessness and ... I was that way as a resident. You know, I was .. I got worse as time went on, I'm sure.

SCHANCHE: Got worse or better?

DR. DeBAKEY: Well, I mean in a sense that I became more intolerant. I didn't get more tolerant. I became more intolerant. And it's very difficult. This is the hardest thing for me to tolerate still. A sloppy attitude or a mediocre attitude or mediocre ability. I don't want to be around people like that. I have difficulty in tolerating them. And as I say it's becoming even more difficult for me as I've grown older. It's hard for me to mellow to this, even though I know it's a reality.

SCHANCHE: Is it a useful teaching tool though?

DR. DeBAKEY: Well, I don't know. I think that it can backfire if you aren't careful. I think you do have to give people encouragement and a feeling that they're doing a good job when they do. And I try to do this, because I admire that. But you see it's so uncommon that... Well, I think in balance, yes. I think that you will do more good teaching someone that way than if you completely overlook their inadequacies.

SCHANCHE: He'll never forget.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah. But I'm not sure that I do it because I'm trying to do a better job of teaching. I do it really because I can't tolerate it. I bite my tongue up til it's crooked.

SCHANCHE: It's spontaneous.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah. Then I burst out. But I think it's more impressive as a teaching method than the harm that it does, let's say, against teaching--good teaching.

SCHANCHE: Bust them nice.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah. That's right. That's right.

SCHANCHE: Well, I noticed you don't seem to carry a grudge.

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh no. I don't... I'm not... No, no, I don't carry a grudge. I'm not a.. basically, a person that's vengeful. Vengence really isn't in me and I don't know why, but I just don't have that. Of course, I do recall in my early years as a boy that my mother also said that vengence is for the Lord. She used to quote that. But, I don't carry a grudge and one time over the immediate effects of getting mad about something , I get over it. I'm through with it and it doesn't bother me anymore. I may get dissappointed in a person. I may be off of him, but I..

SCHANCHE: Once an old Catholic priest said that you hate the sin, not the sinner. Is that right?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah. Yeah. Well, that's true. Exactly. But, the other thing I think about that is that if you're really very busy

DR. DeBAKEY: and you've got a lots to do, you don't have time for vengence. You know, you don't have... You have to nurture vengence. There are people who do, you know. They nurture it. They just... You know, they live on it. They turn it over and over in their minds and they want to get back at you.

SCHANCHE: Have you known someone like that in your life?

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, yes, I've known people who are like that. They just... They're looking for the day when they can get back at somebody. Well, I think for one thing when you do that you hurt yourself. You hurt yourself and that will just eat you up. Just like hatred, you know. Vengence is a form of hatred. And hatred is something that if you carry it around in your heart, it will destroy you. And if you're busy and got lots to do and your mind is active with the things you want to do you don't have time for hatred. Because hatred also has to be nurtured, you know. You've got to feed it. So, I don't ... I haven't trained myself for this, I must say. I don't know why. I guess you're just built this way, wouldn't you say?

SCHANCHE: You're a product of your background.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, I think that's part of it, too. Yeah. But, I think, you know, really, Don, I think if you've got... if your mind is actively engaged in seeking, let's say, new information--whether it's not by your own active research--whether it's by reading or traveling, by seeing, by talking to people, and so on--. And I think you've got to have, and I say this all the time, reduced to very simple terms. You've just got to have a great sense of curiousity about life, you know. And it's got to drive you. And if you have this tremendous thirst then..and it drives you, it's like you're thirsty for water. By golly, you know, you just aren't going to stop until you find some water. And I think this is an important thing to develop in one's mind and it becomes a driving force. Now, I don't know how you cultivate that other than the fact that it too feeds on itself. The more you feed that the more you satisfy the more thirsty you become. And I..

SCHANCHE: I have a feeling that you're born with that curiosity and that there are dangers that it might get stifled when you're very young.

DR. DeBAKEY: Well, I have a feeling that's true too, because, you see, as long as I can remember in my earliest youth, and I can

DR. DeBAKEY: only remember a certain incidence when I was, say before I went...I can remember when I first went to school. I remember my mother taking me to the school. And I can remember certain little things during my early period of development before that, not many, because some of those I remember only because they were told to me later. And I really don't remember them. I remember what they tell me.

SCHANCHE: Such as the case of your dissecting the bird?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yes. I don't remember that as an episode, but I do remember my father telling this story. But I can remember watching my mother sew. I can see her now, even in my mind. But that was because I saw a lot of that. But I also in going back in my mind--as far back as I can remember--do remember how curious I was about everything. And it just seemed like I was constantly seeking more...

SCHANCHE: Your curiosity was encouraged rather than--a lot of times it's not, you know.

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Oh, yes, very much so. My father and mother both encouraged my curiosity. They didn't burn it

DR. DeBAKEY: at all. Now the rest of...

SCHANCHE: And your teachers also?

DR. DeBAKEY: And my teachers did. Yes. I was very fortunate, I think, in all the teachers that I had. I never had a teacher that I disliked. I never had a teacher that I really disliked. There were teachers that I liked better than other teachers, but I liked all my teachers, both in grammar school and high school--the teachers that I still remember in grammar school and high school. And all the teachers that I had in college.

SCHANCHE: So you found at least one of your medical school professors to be a terrible bore.

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, yeah, but I didn't dislike him. I just found him a bore. That's true. But I didn't.. In fact, I liked him as a person. I thought he was a fine old gentleman, but I thought he was a terrible bore. Yeah. There were others that I thought were bores. But in my relationship, as student to teacher, I never encountered a single one that I disliked. And I almost did. And I remember this very well. This was a math teacher who I first found...I didn't like her mannerism. I thought she was kind of a...well a little tyrannical, so to speak.

DR. DeBAKEY: And I was waiting for an opportunity to get at her, so to speak. And I liked math and I thought I was good at math. I guess I was for my age. Anyway, one day she put a problem on the board and showed us how to get the answer and I immediately raised my hand and said that was wrong.

SCHANCHE: Caught her in the flesh.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah. But you know I later became very good friends with her and I liked her very much, in fact, subsequently operated on a member of her family and took care of her later on. But I think I was fortunate. We had a good group of people as teachers in Lake Charles because most of them came back and were from families of Lake Charles. And they had taught for varying periods of time until maybe they got married or ...

SCHANCHE: Back to Germany, when you came home from your European time, did you at any point ever consider just going into the private practice of surgery? Or were you already so academically oriented that you wanted to stay in academic medicine?

DR. DeBAKEY: No, I turned down many opportunities to go into private practice, because many of the doctors enjoined wanted me

DR. DeBAKEY: to join with them at varying times after I got back. And I could have joined in, you know, in a very lucrative practice of medicine. There were several of the doctors there who were very...who had a very lucrative practice already. But I wouldn't leave Tulane and Dr. Ochsner because I wanted to remain in the academic set up.

SCHANCHE: Was your brother Ernest through medical school by then?

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, yes. You see, he..he was a resident. Let me get my dates straight. No, he was still in medical school when I was in Europe. He was still a medical student, because he was..he was in an accident at home--got burned badly--and Dr. Ochsner and Dr. Mims Gage, who was the associate professor, who was a wonderful person in my life, went.. drove to Lake Charles to see him. And then brought him back to New Orleans and took care of him. And I was in Europe at the time, you see. And I remember this. My father and mother were also so grateful to them for doing this. They thought they saved his life.

SCHANCHE: What kind of an accident?

DR. DeBAKEY: He went in... We have an out house in the back of the house and had a couple staying--a Negro couple who stayed there.

DR. DeBAKEY: And they had--it was the winter time during the Christmas holidays--he was back home for the Christmas holidays. And they turned over a gasoline tank, an old gasoline tank. It caught fire and he went in there--rushed in to help put out the fire and get them out of there. And his clothes caught on fire, while he was helping them. Burned his legs pretty badly. And got third degree burns and _____. He was pretty sick for a while. So they took him back to New Orleans from the hospital in Lake Charles. Took care of him. He got well. We were very grateful to them.

SCHANCHE: He was a senior medical student then?

DR. DeBAKEY: I think he was either a junior or a senior medical student then. Yes, I'd have to go back to my dates.

SCHANCHE: Who was the other doctor? Dr. Gage?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, Mims Gage, who was a very, very fine person, who interesting enough I subsequently operated on.

SCHANCHE: Was he also on the surgery faculty?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, he was second to Dr. Ochsner. He was an associate professor with Dr. Ochsner and actually a little bit older than Dr. Ochsner. But a tremendously loyal person. A great

DR. DeBAKEY: raconteur of stories, especially French stories and and just a great person all around. Good surgeon. Good, good clinician. Taught me a great deal about the clinical practice of medicine in terms of taking time to examine a patient thoroughly to get a good history and then on that basis to try and decide what was wrong with the patient. Find out a great deal, you know. As much as you could about a patient. He was really great in that sense. Good clinician--one of the best. Astute diagnostician. I admired him tremendously. And then he was a kindly person. And my father and mother were .. both had tremendous respect for him. And he.. he was very.. a friend to the family. He became a great friend of our family. And I just.. I loved him and admired him. He was an entirely different person from Dr. Ochsner.

SCHANCHE: He had a quieter sort of personality?

DR. DeBAKEY: Well, no, he was not.. He was more a.. He was a more of a Southern gentleman-type personality. Dr. Ochsner was from North Dakota, I think, South Dakota. And then he got all of his training in the North. And Mims Gage was a typical Southerner--very warm, gentlemanly person--

DR. DeBAKEY: kindly person. And somewhat undisciplined, that is he was poorly organized, but lovable.

SCHANCHE: The type of person who likes to live in chaos.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, yeah. But lovable. He just.. He wasted an awful lot of your time when you were around him, but you enjoyed being around him, you know. And I loved him and liked to be with him, and yet I knew I had to get away because I had the work to do. He'd waste your time telling you all kinds of stories and so on. I later had the gratification to serve him by operating on him. And.. He had developed an aneurysm of the aorta--common aorta. I operated on him.

SCHANCHE: Was that when you were in Houston?

DR. DeBAKEY: After I was in Houston. He came to Houston. Wonderful man.

SCHANCHE: Was it a good operation?

DR. DeBAKEY: My mother.. Do you know that my mother used to say a prayer for him every night.

SCHANCHE: Really?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah. A prayer for him and Dr. Ochsner.

SCHANCHE: Was that after Ernest's accident?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah.

SCHANCHE: They probably hadn't met the two of them before then.

DR. DeBAKEY: Well, they'd met them, but didn't know them well. You know, they were in Lake Charles. After that they got to know them better and, of course, when my brother was moved to New Orleans, you see, my father and mother just moved with him and stayed with him until he got well.

SCHANCHE: Did Ernest have any inclination for academics or was he set out for private practice from the start?

DR. DeBAKEY: Right from the start. He was very independent and didn't want to be... Dr. Ochsner tried to keep him from leaving. Dr. Ochsner's often said that Ernest was the best technician he ever trained. He's got tremendous ability , both technically and he's a good surgeon in every way--extremely able person, but he has no desire to.. Oh, he wrote a few papers when he was there. But he had no desire to remain in an academic set up. He wanted to be independent completely and make his own life.

SCHANCHE: Did he go right to Mobile?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah. Yeah, he first went to Mobile with another doctor who is from Mobile. And it wasn't long before that broke up.

DR. DeBAKEY: He's still there--the other doctor. And they're good friends, but it was obvious that..

SCHANCHE: Split their practice.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah.

SCHANCHE: You were never tempted to join him in practice?

DR. DeBAKEY: No. And I, in fact, I tried... On one occasion I asked him if he'd be willing to come to Houston. And he said, "No, " he said, "You know, I'd love to be with you and so on," because we're very close. But he said, " I don't think that would work out very well. I'd have to start all over in private practice and I've got a good practice going." Because he quickly developed the best practice in Mobile and became a top surgeon there--just had too much ability.

SCHANCHE: But he's not... Teaching didn't appeal to him?

DR. DeBAKEY: No. No, he..even as a resident it didn't. He was very, very short with the other people. They couldn't measure up to his standards, you know, and it could be he'd tell them off. He was a hard resident to get along with.

SCHANCHE: Well, when you came back to New Orleans did you come in as an associate professor, then?

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, no, an assistant professor.

SCHANCHE: Assistant professor.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah. And I was an assistant professor until about four years--the usual time, you know. You just set your time--three or four years and then they make you a surgery professor. I remained an associate professor until I went to war. When the war started in '42 there was what they called a ...university units. This is a kind of thing stemmed really from World War I when universities formed their own medical units--volunteers the unit. And they call the base hospitals numbers, if I can remember. Well, when the one was formed at Tulane Dr. Gage insisted upon joining and he became leader of that unit. He wanted me to join with him and I wanted badly to go with him. Dr. Ochsner simply said...put his foot down.. and said, "I can't let both of you go. I need one of you here." And then he said, "Mims, you've got seniority and you can go if you want to but if you go, Mike has to stay. That's up..." Well there wasn't anything I could do about it. I begged Dr. Gage to find a way for me to go with him and he said, "Well, what can I do, Mike? The Chief said you

DR. DeBAKEY: can't go. I talked to him and that's it. You have to be declared essential." So I was declared essential which meant of course that I could not volunteer as long as I was on the faculty. So, after they went. They left and I went to see Dr. Ochsner and I said, "Dr. Ochsner, I've just got to talk with you about this. I appreciate your wanting to make me essential. Maybe that's the right thing to do." But I said, "You know, I'll never be happy with myself--I could never live with myself--if I don't have some part in this war as a surgeon!" And he said, "Well, let me think about it." Well, we talked again and finally he told me, he said, "Mike, I'm going to let you volunteer," but he said, "You know I think you're making a mistake. I think I'm making a mistake, because I have such tremendous regard for you that I feel that I cannot go against your conscience and against your will. So I'm going to let you volunteer." So I volun.... There was a professor of pediatrics... The professor of pediatrics had gotten the new air force hospital in Mississippi. And at that point in time he asked me to join with him--go there with him. And so, Dr. Ochsner told me, he said, "You know Dr. Rankin

DR. DeBAKEY: up in Washington wants to have you come up there. And I said, "Well, when does he want me." He said, "Well, I don't know. I'll speak to him and find out." So, I decided I didn't want to wait for that. And I told Dr. Ochsner this and....

END SIDE I (A) 45 mins.

SIDE II (B)

Pierre Hotel, N. Y.

3/6/72

DR. DeBAKEY: Well, I hadn't been there more than a couple of weeks before Dr. Rankin, who then was the chief surgical consultant to the Surgeon General in Washington arranged my orders to come up there.

SCHANCHE: How did Rankin know you? You were pretty well-known throughout American medical education then, I suppose.

DR. DeBAKEY: Well, Rankin knew me because by that time I had written a lot of papers and..with Dr. Ochsner..and I had met many of these people when they had come to visit with Dr. Ochsner. I'd often meet them at the plane, or the airport, and take them in and show them around. And

DR. DeBAKEY: so I.. They got to know me as sort of a young surgeon who was coming up in the world, you know. Making a name for himself. Young surgeon who was making a name for himself. So, and of course Dr. Ochsner had spoken about me, you know--able and so on. Dr. Rankin was looking for a young fellow to join his little group in Washington. He needed help and I really found out later why he wanted me. He just.. He really needed a lot of help because he gave me all kinds of things to do. And I was given a number of responsibilities immediately upon my getting there. I remember that I drove..it was in the winter time..and I drove up there and arrived in Washington shortly after they had had a snow storm. There was a lot of snow.

SCHANCHE: Maybe the winter of '42, right?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah. It was miserable. And I had.. The best I could do was to get a hotel room. They had made arrangements for me to stay at this hotel, Roger Smith Hotel, right across the street from the building in which the Surgeon General was housed at that time. Because you see the Pentagon hadn't been completed. Later when it was completed we moved out there. And they had a rule at this hotel: you could

DR. DeBAKEY: only stay there one week. Then they throw you out. You know it was hectic in Washington then. And so, I was trying to find a place to stay. There was a little cafeteria in the same building around the side. I think it's on Eighteenth Street--catercornered from the Roger Smith Hotel. I used to eat my breakfast in there.

SCHANCHE: Eighteenth and H? Or Eighteenth and..

DR. DeBAKEY: No, no. This is about Eighteenth and.... Yeah, I guess it is.

SCHANCHE: About...It's further up west than the whole complex around the Roger Smith.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, Eighteenth and.. It's Eighteenth and.. Let's see, the next street down would be "I" I guess.

SCHANCHE: Well, "K" and "H"... They're about a block beyond the Roger Smith, then go on towards ..Pennsylvania comes in...

DR. DeBAKEY: Well, the Roger Smith is between "H"and I think...

SCHANCHE: "H" and "I". But any rate, yeah, right..

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, I think it's between "H" and "I".

So, I got to know the counter girl at the cafeteria. The check points, you know, where you paid your check, you cash in.

DR. DeBAKEY: She was married to a man who had just recently gone into the service. I'd been looking and looking for a place to stay. Couldn't find a room anywhere. So, I walked in one day and she said, "You know," she said, "There's a..there's a place right around the corner here where the janitor used to stay in this building. He used to have a room." And she said, "Why don't you go see. Maybe that room's available." Well, I dashed out of there and went over there to see the man who rented this apartment. And he said, "Yeah, it's available." And I said, "Will you rent it to me?" And he said, "Well, come on down and take a look at it and if you like it you can have it." So we went down there and it was a room about half the size of this room.

SCHANCHE: Down in the basement of the apartment?

DR. DeBAKEY: In the basement of the apartment. There was around the side of it, there was a kind of shower and toilet. Very, very primitive looking. The room itself had a little, kind of a cot as a bed, not a real bed, kind of a cot. And I said, "Well, I guess I could live here for a while anyway until I find another place." And he said, "Sure you can take it."

DR. DeBAKEY: And he said, "You're going to have to clean it up yourself. I don't have anybody to clean it." I said, "Oh, I can do that." So I took it. I've forgotten what I paid for it. But, I was damn glad to get it. And you see it was just around the corner. So that made it very convenient. So I lived there for a while.

SCHANCHE: You hadn't even had any training in how to be an Army officer, had you?

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, I didn't even know.. I hadn't had.. You know, I didn't know how to salute. You know, I didn't know how to dress. I had a uniform on, but I wasn't sure it was right.

SCHANCHE: What were you? A captain?

DR. DeBAKEY: I was a captain. So, the thing I was resentful about that was that had I been able to go with this Tulane unit, I would have been a major. You see? But anyway, I was so damn glad to be in the service that it didn't bother me as much about rank. I didn't know much about rank, anyway until later and then as it turned out rank didn't bother me a great deal because I was able to travel very often in the name of the Surgeon General. So I dissimulated the position

DR. DeBAKEY: of a two star general. But I went.. When I checked in at the Surgeon General's office, they said you had to go down to personnel. I went down to personnel. There was an old army officer down there in charge of personnel and he was bitter with life. Oh, this war had really destroyed his regular army. And he was pretty bitter about the whole thing and all the civilians coming in and ruining it. The nice life they had before. So he didn't like anybody. And when I came in, he wanted to know, you know, a number of other things. And he said, "You haven't had any orientation?" I said, "No." He said, "Okay. You can leave tomorrow morning at Fort..some place in Maryland, I've forgotten the name..And he said, "You'll be there for six weeks getting your orientation." So I went back up and told General Rankin that I was leaving tomorrow to go to ..... . And he said, "Who told you that?" And I said, "Well, the man in charge of personnel. I just checked with him. He said he was going to send my orders up in a little while." He had a secretary by the name of Miss Jacobs. He just bellowed out to her. Then he called on the phone. He bellowed out to her, you know. He was the kind of...

DR. DeBAKEY: Rankin was short, but he made up for his height by his aggressive attitude. He said, "Miss Jacobs, get Colonel so-and-so on the phone for me. That goddamn son of a bitch." Talked to her.. Talked like that in front of almost anybody. That was just short, you know. Got on the phone and he said, "Colonel, what's this business about DeBakey going to Fort such-in-such!' He said, "I just want you to know that I didn't go to a lot of trouble to get him transferred from the Air Force up here to the Army to spend and waste six weeks taking an orientation course. I don't give a damn whether he learns anything about the Army. That ain't what I brought him up here for. I got far more important responsibility for him to discharge than that." And he went on for a while. And then he interspersed it with curses. And then he said, "Now I just want it understood that I have no intention of letting him go, if I have to speak to General Kirk about this, I will." Well, by that time, this fellow was pretty pulverized. He hadn't had a good word in edgewise. And he said, ... He had obviously told General Rankin that I didn't have to go.

DR. DeBAKEY: Anyway. And I told him all about that was the only reason to go...It wasn't any reason for me to go. And he said, "Well, I'm glad to hear that. That takes care of that. Then forget about it. Sorry I called you." Or something like that. He turned around to me and he says , "Colonel so-and-so says you're just a goddamn liar. Neve r intended to send you over there." And that's ... He dealt with me like this from then on. But he was wonderful to me and I must say I had another very, very enjoyable relationship. And he had some _____for me too.

SCHANCHE: Was he skilled in the ways of Washington at that time? Because he was relatively new to it too, though, wasn't he?

DR. DeBAKEY: Oh, yes. No, no. Well, yes, but he wasn't new to the ways of the political relationships that existed either. He was very skillful. And he had a great deal of power and influence. But he was.. You know, beneath all of this exterior of a kind of a bear of a man, he was very gentle--very kind. And I can recall so well I was away at the time on some trip, when my.. We had..the only child we had then was our oldest boy. He was about only..he was about three or four maybe, less than that. Two years old. And he got very

DR. DeBAKEY: sick with pneumonia. And my wife got, oh, in the middle of the night, got very concerned about him. It was on an Easter Sunday morning that this happened. She went .. She bundled him up and put him in the car and took him over to General Rankin's apartment. She didn't know what else to do. She was scared to death he was dying. And, you see, she had been a nurse and she knew a little bit about medicine and about patients, so she knocked on the door and General Rankin came in his robe. You know, he wasn't fully dressed. And..but he was very kind to her. He didn't get upset with her at all. She was carrying the child in her arms and said, "I'm scared to death he's going to die and I didn't know what to do." He told her, "My child, let's take him immediately to the Walter Reed Hospital." So he got dressed very quickly and took her with the child to Walter Reed Hospital. Had him admitted and then raised hell about getting penicillin. You know it was very scarce then.

SCHANCHE: Very scarce.

DR. DeBAKEY: But that was the kind of person he was. And as I say.. My wife after that was just devoted to him. Devoted to him.

DR. DeBAKEY: Of course, I remember that. But he was a very fine man, very fine man, basically. Though his temper increased..(Come in. Yeah. Alright.) He had very strong feelings about people and if he liked you, he liked you completely. If he disliked you, for any reason, that was it...

SCHANCHE: That was it.

DR. DeBAKEY: He had nothing to do with you and he...

SCHANCHE: Didn't he later become Surgeon General?

DR. DeBAKEY: No.

SCHANCHE: Rankin didn't?

DR. DeBAKEY: No. He at one time was president of the American Medical Association. Very prominent man, of course, in surgery and in medicine. And a wonderful friend. He really was a very wonderful friend to me. And.. And he gave me increasing responsibilities all the time. I prepared various types of memorandum for him, you know, analyses and so on.

SCHANCHE: You did a massive study of surgery in World War I -- army surgery in World War I?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yes, I did. And I wrote every surgical order. They were called the Thirty-Two Orders. I wrote them personally-- every single one. I assisted him in devising and developing various things about surgical consultants and arranging for their appointments and that sort of thing. I wrote all the

DR. DeBAKEY: articles in Health, which was a classified document. And out of that relationship with Health the editor was a man by the name of Gilbert Beebe. I collaborated with Gilbert Beebe on a book on military..on medical military logistics, which was the first book of its kind. Amazing. Nobody had ever written anything like it. This was designed to give some idea what to expect in any kind of war in terms of casualties and personnel and what you needed and the type of personnel you needed. And of course, as a consequence of the work I was doing, I was also the editor of a Army medical journal. And I censored all the papers and decided personally whether or not they could be published as they came in.

SCHANCHE: Were you responsible for innovations in Army medicine--Army surgery?

DR. DeBAKEY: No, I didn't..I wasn't really responsible for them because, you see, I was not doing any surgery and I was not in the field. I did have developed some, on the basis of data that I collected, I had something to do with , for example, with the development of the armor in terms of where it would do the most good and what type of injuries you could expect

DR. DeBAKEY: and therefore should protect from, and so on. I collected the data for that and participated in that development. And I did put concepts together on the basis of data and was responsible for putting these in a form that finally was the basic concept adopted by all the armed forces and later years exist.

SCHANCHE: For example, what..?

DR. DeBAKEY: Well, these were the concepts concerning what type of injuries you treated in a certain way at..in series..at various stages of development. That's right. And , of course, these concepts have formed the real basis of everything we've done since World War II. And the only innovations that have taken place in this regard has been the ability to compress them. You see?

SCHANCHE: Right.

DR. DeBAKEY: And move... with new communication methods, like heliocopters. But the basic principles remain the same.

SCHANCHE: Was this your first real full-time administrative job?

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah. First time. That's right.

SCHANCHE: How did you react to that?

DR. DeBAKEY: Well, like, you know, I, of course, it was war time, you know and I thought I was doing my duty and I was highly motivated. But also, it was a great challenge. It was a challenging thing for me. I accepted that as such and I wanted to be successful in dealing with it. So I enjoyed it very much. I used to have.. I worked harder or as hard then as ever. Speaking of that, I don't know whether I told you this story or not, but there was a regular army fellow by the name of Nemo, who had graduated from Tulane. And the fellow took a liking to me because he was a Tulane graduate and I was. When we first met we said, you know, welcome (?). We got to know each other well because.. for that reason and he took an interest in me. And secondly, because we were in the same car pool together for a while. And, in those days you had a car pool. I'm not sure that's not sort of a good idea. It certainly would reduce the number of cars on the streets. And so I used to go by his office and pick him up. I was on a higher floor than he was. So I'd come down and pick him up on my way to the car pool to go home. Well, I'd get to his office. He would be ready

DR. DeBAKEY: to put on his overcoat exactly when he was told and his gloves. Never had a single thing on his desk. Never took anything home. Sometimes I'd get down there before he was quite ready and his desk was clean as a whistle. Nothing in his "in" basket at all. And used to..I finally said to him..I'd take a bulging briefcase of work home. And I said to him one day, I said, "Nemo, I wish you would tell me something. How in the world do you get all of your work done during the day? Look, I'm still carrying work home. I can't get it all done." And he said, "Well, I tell you. I never take any work home. When I leave here, that's it. I've put in my full day." And I said, "What do you do?" He said, "Well.." He pulled out this right lower-hand drawer of his desk which was a deep drawer, you see. And it was full of papers. He said, "At the end of the day, I put all the papers that I haven't gotten to there." And then I said, "Well, I know, but the next day you've got to get to them. So you're just piled up." He said, "No. I never touch those papers unless somebody hollers for something. You'd be surprised how many of those papers never have to have to have any action

DR. DeBAKEY: taken on them at all. When that desk gets full, I take those papers out and throw them away."

And that's one way to deal with certain things , I guess.

SCHANCHE: You never adopted that technique?

DR. DeBAKEY: No, my conscience wouldn't let me do that.

SCHANCHE: What kinds of... What benefits did you personally gain from this military experience? I know you gained quite a bit. It was your first introduction to national affairs.

DR. DeBAKEY: That's really a big area , because that's going to require a lot of attention because that was really the kind of exposure that sort of opened my whole view and opened my whole mental approach ...and you might say, my whole horizon of public service. And public concern, so to speak. Because I then.. I learned something about government, about it's operation, about both the bad and the good that comes from, you might say, bureaucracy. And the role of government and its responsibility to the people. And it made me aware of a lot of things and step by step I became more mature about it--more understanding about it. And I think, it made me realize in a sense what the responsibilities of the government was to the people. I began to appreciate the fact that as a

DR. DeBAKEY: taxpayer I was putting money into government and other people were putting money into it. What was it doing? How efficient was it? And so on. And we saw great wastes and inefficiencies in government. And, of course, first the war experience itself brought out some of the waste. And the things that we saw were so wasteful. Now I realize that war is wasteful but it doesn't have to be that wasteful. It was wasteful because of many things. It was wasteful because of the organization--because there were the kinds of responsibilities that were not discharged properly--and a lack of responsibility on the part of many public servants. But also, and think to a large extent because of the feeling on the part of many people in the government that, you know, it wasn't their money and they didn't have any sense of responsibility for it and it wasn't brought down to them from above. And then there was a feeling on the part of many of us who had this experience that we shouldn't allow this to ever happen again. And if we ever get into a war again, we should be prepared for it, medically. Here was a... You see, none of us appreciated the fact that

DR. DeBAKEY: we had an army, and a navy, and an air force and the medical services were so completely inadequate--so completely inadequate with people who were not trained to do the things they should have been trained to do. So here the civilians who had the training had to come in and then learn the military. And it took us two years to do all this--to learn all this. So many of us felt this should never be allowed to happen again. We had to keep it current. And we thought about setting up ways and means of doing this and that's when we set up the committee to the Secretary of W. at that time..

SCHANCHE: Secretary of War.

DR. DeBAKEY: At that time. That's right. And then later because of my own interest in certain things, for example, it seemed to me such a terrible waste in World War I that they didn't follow through on many things that they should have that we would have learned more from. So I conceived the idea that we ought to do this now while we were in World War II. We should, you see I had become thoroughly familiar with the history of World War I because I had done a lot of research on it--found many of the deficiencies

DR. DeBAKEY: that occurred in World War I and figured that had we learned our lesson then we wouldn't have missed it in World War II. I didn't want.. I thought we shouldn't allow that to happen. So, I became interested in the history of World War II. I became very friendly with the man who helped write the history of World War I. And I went through quite a little story there with the N.R.C. and the history of World War II. Finally, our view did prevail in this regard and I was asked to be chairman of the editorial committee. Then shortly after that the Hoover Commission came into being. See, there were other people like myself who also became interested in the fact that there was tremendous extravagance and waste. And so through Mr. Vorhees , who was one of Hoover's boys, so to speak--you know he had these people work for him. He was put on the committeeand asked me to be put on the committee . And I got to know Vorhees during World War II very well. And that was a tremendous experience too. Well, these--all these steps--you see, made me much more aware of public service and the government's role. And the role of the Veterans Administration in the

DR. DeBAKEY: armed forces.

SCHANCHE: Maybe we should save this for deep exploration.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, because this is very important and we really need to get into some of the details of it, because it's a tremendous story in many ways.

SCHANCHE: Yeah.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, as a matter of fact, I'm going to have to call...

SCHANCHE: It's four o'clock.

DR. DeBAKEY: Yeah, because I've got to dress and change clothes...

END SIDE II (B) : 15 mins.